

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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**Statement by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
in support of OAS efforts in Haiti**

The European Union welcomes with hope the efforts by the Organisation of American States (OAS) and CARICOM to find a solution to the political crisis in Haiti, in particular the serious problems created by last year's elections. The European Union likewise welcomes with satisfaction the signs of openness to dialogue which emerged between the parties during the last visit of the OAS Secretary-General to Haiti.

Recalling the backing which it has always given to OAS action in Haiti, the European Union hails the avenue opened up by the 31st ordinary session of the OAS General Assembly held at San José (Costa Rica) on 5 June 2001 ("Support for democracy in Haiti"), targeting the introduction of a gradual process aimed at the search for a political agreement between all political parties in Haiti without exception and started by Haitian civil society. However, it emphasises that many questions remain to be answered: security of elections, screening of votes, funding of electoral campaigns, etc.

Mindful of the misery and distress facing the people of Haiti, the European Union urges the Government of Haiti, political parties, civil society and other pertinent segments of Haitian society to come together and to cooperate in a spirit of compromise and political normalisation in exploring the avenue thus opened up, the first stage along which is the setting up of a credible, independent and neutral Provisional Electoral Council (PEC) by 1 July 2001. The PEC should determine as soon as possible the date of the new legislative elections. The European Union is convinced that the establishment of such a body would be likely to boost the electoral process necessary if the political crisis is to be resolved and democracy reinforced in Haiti.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, and the EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this declaration.

Internet: <http://ue.eu.int/Newsroom>
E-mail: press.office@consilium.eu.int

10237/01 (Presse 259 - G)